

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of maintaining and selling software, comprising the steps of:

practicing a first sale of the software;

determining whether or not improvements in said software that is

5 on sale are required;

inviting when said improvements are required, an improved source by making public via a network a sales information and an agreement information associated with said software;

performing examination on the improved source applied in

10 response to said invitation in said inviting step; and

carrying out a version-upgrade to incorporate in said software the improved source that has been determined to be accepted, as a result of said examination performed in said performing step.

2. A method of maintaining and selling software according to claim 1, wherein said sales information includes a specification of a software component, a source program of said software, and sales figures regarding said software already sold.

3. A method of maintaining and selling software according to claim 2, further comprising a step of judging whether said invitation is continued or not, if the result of said examination indicates that there is no appropriately improved source,

5 wherein if it is judged in said judging step that said invitation is continued, conditions of an agreement associated with said published agreement information are modified and additional improved sources are invited.

4. A method of maintaining and selling software according claim

3, wherein said modification of conditions is an upward adjustment to remuneration for making said improved source.

5. A method of maintaining and selling software according to claim 3, wherein if it is judged in said judging step that said invitation is not continued, sales of said software are suspended.

6. A method of maintaining and selling software according to claim 4, further comprising a step of practicing a second sale of the software to which said version-upgrade has been carried out.

7. A method of maintaining and selling software according to claim 6, wherein in said first and second sales, a license for executing the programs stored in a server is sold by using a network.

8. A method of maintaining and selling software according to claim 6, wherein in said first and second sales, said software is distributed by using a network.

9. A method of maintaining and selling software according to claim 8, wherein in said second sale, patches associated with said software are distributed by using a network.

10. A method of maintaining and selling software according to claim 9, wherein said network is the Internet.